

Bowman's *Cosmopolitan Justice: The Axial Age, Multiple Modernities, and the Postsecular Turn*.

Jonathan Bowman (2015). *Cosmopolitan Justice: The Axial Age, Multiple Modernities, and the Postsecular Turn*. Bern: Springer. 328pp., £117.00 (h/b), ISBN 9783319127088.

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Following mainstream Western political thought, justice must always be rational and secular. Hence, any cultural or religious tradition should be kept exclusively in the private realm. Jonathan Bowman intends to question these assumptions by proposing an alternative view of justice in the global realm that takes religious thought and cultural traditions as fundamental sources for the development of cosmo(i)politan principles of justice. His thesis stands on Karl Jaspers' Axial Age thesis, which criticises the idea that modernity is a single development emerging in sixteenth-century Europe. He argues that various traditions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and the Abrahamic religions) began a simultaneous but not homogenous path to modernity between 800-200BC and hence we should shift our conception of modernity to that of *multiple modernities* rising in different parts of the world. According to Bowman, due to the co-existence of these diverging conceptions of modernity, if one wishes to establish principles of global justice, one must do so by looking for an overlapping consensus upon which all of these traditions can stand. Finally, he argues that an interpretation of Jürgen Habermas' second-person approach to human reasoning can work as this common denominator for establishing a *cosmoipolitan* justice.

This book covers much ground in its more than 300 pages. It presents Jaspers' and Habermas' theories and their contemporary interpretations and critiques. The book also offers an in-depth analysis and interpretation of the different axial traditions. Finally, it introduces a critique of the rationalist-secular approach to global justice, proposing alternative principles for it. Due to this expansive objective, it seems that much relevant information is missing from the book. The author takes for granted the definition of some relevant concepts, and passes shallowly over some of the theories upon which he structures his thesis. There also seems to be an ample disregard for primary sources in the analysis of ancient traditions. The author relies mostly on contemporary secondary sources to justify his arguments and so, unless one already has a comprehensive understanding of the subjects in question, one could question the validity of his interpretations. For this reason, the book can be considered as useful and appealing to experts

on the subject, but not for people who do not have an in-depth familiarity with it. Despite the attractiveness of Bowman's thesis, and his innovative approach to global justice, readers are advised to go to his sources before approaching his book.